

In Wake of Uptick in Overdose Deaths Statewide, DHSS Urges People in Active Use and Their Families to Seek out Treatment

NEW CASTLE (June 1, 2017) – With six suspected overdose deaths statewide since Monday and multiple overdoses within hours Tuesday in New Castle County, the Department of Health and Social Services is urging Delawareans suffering from addiction to reach out for a connection to treatment.

The suspected overdose deaths – one on Sunday, three on Monday and two on Wednesday – bring the total of suspected overdose deaths this year in Delaware to 94. Last year, 308 people died of overdoses in Delaware, up 35 percent from the 228 total deaths in 2015, according to the Division of Forensic Science. Paramedics and the Delaware State Police also responded to a number of overdoses in New Castle County on Tuesday in less than eight hours.

“This epidemic continues to impact families in every part of our state,” Governor John Carney said. “When people are ready for treatment, we need to have the resources and services ready for them. We cannot afford to turn away anyone.”

Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker, a family physician, urged people in active use or their families to call DHSS’ 24/7 Mobile Crisis Hotline to be connected to experienced crisis staff who can help them navigate the most appropriate treatment services. In New Castle County, call 1-800-652-2929. In Kent and Sussex counties, call 1-800-345-6785.

“Addiction is taking an incredible toll on individuals suffering from this disease,” Secretary Walker said. “It takes a toll on their families, as well, who are desperate to get their loved ones connected to treatment. As a Department, we have increased treatment services across the state, and will do more in the coming months. I urge individuals in active use to call our Mobile Crisis Hotline in order to take that first step toward recovery.”

In response to the addiction epidemic, the General Assembly has increased funding for the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health in order to add capacity to the public treatment system statewide. The increased funding has been used to:

- Open a second withdrawal management clinic in November 2015 in Harrington, joining one in New Castle County, near Elsmere. Both locations now offer new and expanded withdrawal management services.
- Expand residential treatment beds from one location to four locations in February 2016, with new beds open in Smyrna (men), Dover (one location for men; one for women) and Delaware City (women), increasing total capacity by 22 percent. These beds are available for people who have received withdrawal management services and are in need of residential treatment to further their recoveries. The changes increased the total number of residential treatment beds from 78 to 95, with all beds having a variable length of stay.
- Increase residential treatment beds for young people age 18 to 25, with 16 new beds expected to be online late this summer, bringing the total to 32 beds.
- Provide 16 beds for individuals suffering from significant co-occurring disorders (mental illness and addiction).
- Double the number of recovery house beds statewide, with 120 beds now available to aid individuals in making the transition back to their communities.
- Expand outpatient treatment services statewide to include a full continuum of support.

- Open a second Recovery Response Center in Newark, joining an existing center in Ellendale, to provide medical assessments of individuals in immediate crisis for addiction or mental illness.

Dave Humes, who lost his son, Greg, to an accidental overdose in 2012, is a board member of atTAcK addiction. The grassroots advocacy group has pushed for increased treatment services, ending the stigma associated with the chronic disease, and the expanded use of naloxone, the overdose-reversing prescription medication.

“This week we lost six more Delawareans unnecessarily to overdose,” Humes said. “We need to find new and creative ways in our prevention efforts. We have to extend our outreach to those Delawareans who are still in active use. When my son, Greg, relapsed, his use proved to be fatal. Every time a person uses, they run the risk of ending their life. The purity of the heroin and the fentanyl-laced heroin put lives at risk with each use. This is the public health crisis of the 21st century, 553,000 Americans lost to overdose.”

Humes and five other Delawareans are featured in new short videos on DHSS’ redesigned HelpIsHereDE.com, a site for people seeking information and resources about addiction treatment, recovery or prevention. The improved website:

- Is easier to navigate to find detox, treatment, intervention, and recovery resources. Just click on “Get Help Now” on the home page.
- Can be translated into four languages (Spanish, Haitian Creole, French and Chinese) by clicking on Google translate in the top right corner.
- Is more mobile device-friendly.
- Provides updated screening tools and information for health care providers, including on the new Division of Professional Regulation prescribing regulations.
- Contains new videos integrated throughout the site in which Delawareans share their experiences with addiction, treatment,

recovery, prevention and community response. The one- and two-minute testimonials feature individuals in long-term recovery, parents who have lost adult children to overdoses, a treatment provider, and a police officer.

In addition to supporting family members by using the resources on HelpIsHereDE.com, loved ones of those struggling with addiction can get trained on the use of naloxone. For people in the community, naloxone is simple to administer, has proven to save lives and provides an opportunity for recovery to begin. To learn more about community naloxone training classes in Delaware:

http://www.helpishere.de.com/Content/Documents/D0SE_Program_Schedule_.pdf

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The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of life of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations.